

# A Study on Innovative Teaching of Lacquer Painting in Colleges and Universities in China

LI Yuqi\*

Asst. Prof. Dr. Pisit Puntien\*

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University\*

---

Received January 20, 2023 Revise February 25, 2023 Accepted 09 March, 03, 2023

## Abstract

Lacquer painting is a form of painting created with natural lacquer as the primary material, which has a long history, rich content and distinctive cultural and artistic characteristics, which was first established by Mr. Shen Fuwen and incorporated into the art teaching system of Chinese universities in the 1980s was first established by Mr. Shen Fuwen, and was incorporated into the art teaching system of Chinese colleges and universities in the 1980s, and has since become an important field of the art research. In order to follow the trend of modern art development, lacquer painting teaching in colleges and universities as a whole is undergoing changes and innovations; from the teaching curriculum system to the teaching practice methods have made timely adjustments, lacquer painting teaching innovation combines tradition and modernity, making an important orientation to the cultivation of students' innovative thinking.

**Keywords:** college and university; lacquer art; teaching; innovation.

## Introduction

Chinese lacquer painting has a history of thousands of years of development. The contemporary art of lacquer painting is a type of painting that emerged from traditional lacquer art and has a very great innovative and aesthetic value. In the early 1980s, a group of outstanding lacquer artists emerged in the Chinese lacquer art circle. They opened up a new path for contemporary lacquer painting with their rich and diverse forms of expression and profound and unique creative concepts. After several generations of exploration, lacquer painters have gradually formed their own style. The art of lacquer painting brings beauty to people with its unique aesthetic feeling of materials and exquisite craftsmanship, and at the same time, provides us with a new visual language and momentum for development.

Therefore, lacquer painting has also become an important part of art education in colleges and universities. Nevertheless, compared with other majors, lacquer painting started late and faced many practical and realistic problems in teaching practice. According to Professor Cheng Xiangjun, the president of the Academy of Arts and Design



of Tsinghua University: innovation in lacquer painting is a process of constant denial of oneself, which requires learning new "experiences" on the basis of inheriting from the predecessors and combining one's own understanding and knowledge of the laws of painting, and making bold attempts and creations to form a lacquer painting language expression and lacquer painting form with one's own characteristics. In order to meet the current development trend of lacquer painting, innovation in lacquer painting education is imperative, and how to combine the traditional creative techniques of lacquer painting with the new artistic language has become the question we have to think about, and driven by this question to innovate the lacquer painting curriculum so that the art of lacquer painting can be innovative development.

## Theoretical Framework

This paper takes the innovative teaching of modern Chinese lacquer painting as the object of study. Firstly, it elaborates on the important significance of innovative teaching of lacquer painting, then analyzes the current situation and problems of teaching lacquer painting in colleges and universities, and finally discusses the specific measures of innovative teaching of lacquer painting.

## Methodology

This study mainly adopts the following five research methods:

**Literature search method:** search keywords in domestic literature databases such as HowNet, Wanfang database and VIP database, as well as Google Scholar or Web of Science, screen out the literature with a high impact factor of journals in the past 5 years, understand the history and current situation of image and material language, form a certain theoretical basis, and make a summary of the current situation of contemporary lacquer painting creation;

**Comparative study method:** on the basis of collecting a large amount of information on the history of lacquer art and the development of contemporary lacquer painting, a comparative analysis is conducted to obtain comparative information on realistic information and to find out the innovative points of its development;

**Survey method:** based on a systematic survey of the historical situation and the real situation of lacquer craftsmanship, a comprehensive use of historical methods, case study methods and analytical summaries, a planned, comprehensive and systematic understanding of existing materials, and an analysis, comparison and generalization of existing historical documents, so as to explore the innovation of the language of images and materials in contemporary lacquer painting art;

**Image study method:** that is, a case study of one of the patterns of manifestations



in the development of lacquer painting to identify the corresponding image for argument;

**Summarizing method:** summarize the collected data to explore the innovation of contemporary lacquer painting images compared with traditional lacquerware decoration, and the diversity of material language of lacquer painting in the context of the new era, etc.

## Conclusion

### The historical development of lacquer art

China has a long history of lacquer art and was the first country in the world to become skilled in using lacquerware. According to the available archaeological evidence, the ancestors of the neolithic period were already aware of the properties of lacquer and started to use it 8,000 years ago, and the "lacquer bow" excavated from the site is called the "source of lacquer" in China. In 1976, wooden lacquer bowls and lacquer cylinders were found at the Hemudu primitive society site in Yuyao City, Zhejiang Province. According to investigation and evidence, this lacquerware was made more than 7,000 years ago and is the oldest lacquerware found so far. The Xia, Shang, and Western Zhou periods were the budding period in the history of traditional Chinese lacquerware. The emergence of bronze smelting and casting technology provided a solid material basis and technical conditions for the development of the lacquerware craft industry. The Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period were the periods of development of traditional Chinese lacquerware. The invention of "lacquer" production technology brought the expressiveness and wrapping of lacquer to its extreme, creating the technical conditions for the heyday of lacquerware. The Qin and Han dynasties were the heyday of Chinese traditional lacquerware history. During this period, lacquer craftsmanship developed brilliantly. And lacquerware became an indispensable part of people's daily life. The Three Kingdoms, the Jin Dynasty, the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the Sui Dynasty and the Tang Dynasty were the waning periods in the history of traditional Chinese lacquerware. The Warring States period, Qin Dynasty and Western Han Dynasty were periods of unprecedented prosperity of ancient Chinese lacquerware. This period lasted for 400 years and was the first high tide in the history of lacquerware development.

In recent history, lacquer painting became an independent painting in 1984 at the Sixth National Art Exhibition, which laid the foundation for the future development of lacquer painting. In the 20th century, lacquer painting became a unique and charming art form, which received wide attention and love from the art world at home and abroad. It can be said that lacquer painting is a new creation of Chinese national painting, with rich, expressive, distinctive nationalism and strong modernity.



Throughout the history of change, lacquer painting has gone through stages from prosperity to decline and from decline to gradual revival. The development of contemporary Chinese lacquer art has undoubtedly ushered in the best time in the history of Chinese lacquer art.

### **The development of modern lacquer painting and the development of lacquer painting teaching in colleges and universities**

Chinese lacquer painting could not have been created without the influence and promotion of the international lacquer circle in the 20th century and the lacquer painting boom in Europe in the 1930s under the influence of Chinese and Japanese lacquer art produced a group of outstanding lacquer painters, who had a profound influence on Mr. Lei Guiyuan, who was studying in Europe at the time. Upon his return to China, he combined the artistic concepts he learned in France with lacquer art and created a number of exploratory lacquer paintings; and is known as the first Chinese lacquer painter and author of Lectures on Arts and Crafts Techniques.

From the 1920s to 1930s, lacquer artists Mr. Li Zhiqing and Mr. Shen Fuwen studied in Japan, specializing in lacquer art. After returning to China, they sorted and extracted lacquer art techniques and made more than 100 Fu samples of techniques, which laid the foundation for the language expression of modern Chinese lacquer painting. With the support of the state, Shen Fuwen set up a lacquerware major at the Southwest Academy of Fine Arts in 1954, the first lacquer-related school in China at the time, and trained a large number of lacquer artists and educators. This laid the foundation for the development of contemporary lacquer painting. This laid the foundation for the development of contemporary lacquer painting.

In 1962, Vietnamese lacquer mill paintings were exhibited in Beijing and Shanghai. This exchange of lacquer culture between countries was highly valued by national leaders and the art circle. Vietnam used lacquer in painting, expressing such delicate emotions, giving poetic images and rich texture, breaking through the traditional lacquer decoration, not only refreshing the viewers but also introducing the idea of developing lacquer painting in China. Meanwhile, Mr. Qiao Shiguang and Mr. Li Hongyin from the Central Academy of Arts and Design went to Fuzhou Lacquerware Factory to study lacquer painting in order to explore the materials for mural painting as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs selected Cai Kezhen from the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts and Zhu Ji from the Central Academy of Arts and Design to study lacquer painting in Vietnam. Since then, Chinese lacquer artists and painters also had the consciousness that lacquer painting was painting and began the arduous exploration of modern Chinese lacquer painting.

In the 1980s, the joint exhibition of lacquer painting in Fujian and Jiangxi opened



the curtain on the development of lacquer painting and caused a boom in its creation. In 1984, after the 6th National Art Exhibition, the Chinese Artists Association listed lacquer painting as an independent genre, and Chinese modern lacquer painting got a unified title. In the subsequent national art exhibitions, lacquer painting gradually improved in quantity and quality. In 2001, the establishment of the Lacquer Painting Art Committee of the China Artists Association gave Chinese modern lacquer painting a national academic organization, and in 2014, the 12th National Art Exhibition presented lacquer painting for the first time as an independent section in Fuzhou.

With the development of modern Chinese lacquer painting and its influence on the art circle and all sectors of society, lacquer painting came to art institutes of higher learning in the 1980s. At present, more and more colleges and universities are offering lacquer painting courses. And lacquer painting teaching will face problems such as integration with the era; therefore, colleges and universities adjust the curriculum structure according to their own characteristics, cultivate students' practical ability and strengthen their innovative thinking. Based on this, many universities have started to pay attention to the construction of lacquer painting practice studios, opening up off-campus practice bases, establishing lacquer art, lacquer painting teaching practice bases and carrying out cooperative teaching so that lacquer painting teaching is no longer confined to the campus and gives students a better practice environment. However, as lacquer painting has been a new species of painting for only a few decades, a relatively mature, perfect and systematic theoretical knowledge system has not yet been formed, and the course lacks suitable teaching materials, resulting in a lack of systematic knowledge related to lacquer painting, so that outside of lacquer painting teaching and lacquer painting work, the vast majority of colleges and universities treat lacquer painting as an arts and crafts course inside the design major, or classify lacquer painting as a specialized elective course or a public elective course, and there is no systematic theoretical knowledge for creation.

### **The importance of innovative teaching of lacquer painting**

The innovative teaching of lacquer painting has a certain degree of promotion for the development of cultural and creative industries, and the delivery of excellent talents provides new vitality for the long-term development of cultural and creative industries. Innovative teaching is crucial to the cultivation of excellent lacquer painting talents, and these teachings strengthen the importance of innovation from the source, which provides a certain ideological foundation for a series of subsequent initiatives. With a solid ideological foundation, then the cultivation of talents will be able to be carried out in an orderly manner, and the quality of talents will be more in line with the needs of social development, while such practice will also provide certain practical



experience for other regions and for the future development of talents.

For the whole of society, the innovative teaching of lacquer painting can promote the development of the modern cultural industry to a certain extent. In addition to providing high-quality talents for the cultural industry, it also provides a certain direction for the future cultural market; whether it is traditional art teaching or innovative teaching, it is a new change for the art itself. Then in the future, the innovative teaching of lacquer art will further influence the development of related practitioners. In the long run, the innovative teaching of lacquer painting is very necessary and has great significance and is affected profoundly.

### **The development status and problems of teaching lacquer painting courses in colleges and universities**

At present, colleges and universities serve as important cores for academic research on lacquer painting theory, professional art creation and talent training, and more and more colleges and universities are starting to offer lacquer painting courses. It is natural that lacquer painting teaching will face problems such as integration with the era and integration with the general environment. In this context, the teaching of lacquer painting courses in colleges and universities began to improve and reform. Many colleges and universities have also started to open up off-campus practice bases, establish lacquer art and lacquer painting teaching practice bases, and carry out cooperative teaching. The teaching of lacquer painting is no longer confined to the campus, and students have a better environment to practice. However, since lacquer painting has been a new genre for only a few decades, it has not yet formed a relatively mature, perfect and systematic theoretical knowledge system, and the course lacks suitable teaching materials, resulting in a lack of systematic knowledge related to lacquer painting so that there is no systematic corresponding theoretical knowledge cornerstone for teaching lacquer painting and creating lacquer works. In terms of the lacquer painting course, issues such as the definition of lacquer painting, the integration of painting and manufacturability, and the application of large lacquer chemical lacquer. Thus, students have a general understanding of the concept of lacquer painting in the process of learning lacquer painting. Only a few colleges and universities offer an independent lacquer painting major with a comprehensive lacquer painting teaching infrastructure, while the great majority of colleges and universities treat lacquer painting as an arts and crafts course within the design major. There are two undesirable tendencies in specific teaching; on the one hand: some schools focus too much on the performance of lacquer techniques in lacquer painting teaching and are not strict about composition, colour, modelling and other factors. On the other hand : too much pursuit of the expression of painting effect ignores the uniqueness of lacquer language. The relationship between



"lacquer" and "painting" is not properly understood, which is not conducive to the education and development of lacquer painting. In addition, design majors have many specialties and disciplines, but when they offer lacquer painting courses, they do not have clear teaching objectives and focus and do not distinguish the purpose of lacquer painting courses for different specialties but adopt the same teaching method. The teaching of lacquer painting in colleges and universities also has a backward teaching model and a single teaching method, which makes students' understanding of lacquer painting as a kind of craft making, making lacquer painting class a craft art skill training.

Finally, there are still some ideological obstacles, and there are many people who think that tradition and modernity are in conflict. Although the traditional lacquer painting training mode has a higher pursuit of a humanistic spirit, the cultivation of innovative talents does not conflict with it; on the contrary, the development of innovative teaching is the recognition of the pioneering ideas in the humanistic spirit and the recognition of pushing out new ideas, which is consistent with the essence of humanistic spirit. The cultivation of innovative talents is a new way of thinking about the development of culture and industry in the new era. After solving this ideological problem, it is more a matter of practical operability in the classroom professional settings to transform and upgrade after certain research on the development of cultural industries integrates the current talent gap so that the whole lacquer painting professional re-integration division, in this process, need to make a certain grasp of the future development trend, which needs to dig deep from the current specific situation. All in all, as far as the current situation is concerned, the most crucial issue is the change of ideology. Only if there is a certain profound and forward-looking thinking about innovative and creative teaching in the ideology, then the subsequent reform of the lacquer painting profession will be relatively smooth.

### **Specific measures for innovation in lacquer painting teaching**

#### **Build innovative teaching classrooms**

As far as specific teaching is concerned, colleges and universities need to build innovative new classrooms of lacquer art, with other departments closely in pursuit, to break the information barriers between departments, to achieve the exchange of needed goods, to bring into play the comprehensive effectiveness of teaching on a certain basis, to further promote the deepening reform of the innovative system, and to build a good general environment from the management and system levels. In addition, it is also important to clarify the purpose and content of teaching. The goal of lacquer painting teaching is to cultivate a group of high-quality artistic compound personnel with a certain sense of innovation and the ability to adapt to social development, especially for the cultural and creative industries of lacquer painting. Compared to the traditional



\*\*\*\*\*

cultivation of lacquer painting target cultivation, innovative talents are more practical and applied and have a certain insight into the aesthetic trends of the market, with more modern design ideas for their works. In terms of teaching content, the first is the innovative development of the professional field, in line with the market development needs, which is to refine the professional classification in the classroom and consciously cultivate a sense of innovation. In terms of design, certain compound personnel can be cultivated in terms of market demand, design + management, and design + marketing, which adds certain advantages to the technology itself, and these types of talents have certain significance to the cultural and creative industries and even the promotion of the brand culture of enterprises. Secondly, the combination between school and enterprise, creating an innovative industrial park and providing a dynamic platform, thus stimulating students' interest in lacquer painting practice, which to a certain extent, will be able to quickly accumulate practical experience and deeply examine themselves, as well as have a certain grasp of the trends of cultural industry development. Whether from the teaching of theoretical content or the construction of a practical platform, we shall consciously and consciously cultivate innovative thinking and ability so that long-term exercise and polishing can cultivate innovative composite talents with certain cutting-edge conscious compound personnel.

The teaching department also needs to further use effective resources to create a high-quality classroom, stimulate students' interest in innovation, and further cultivate students' sense of independent innovation, and there are social resources in condition to form a linkage and create a creative resource information exchange network in such communication and exchange. It is believed that under the influence of the general environment of innovation, the classroom is the starting point and gradually extended to open up the social resources outside the school to form an interaction, thus effectively cultivating students' innovative consciousness and further improving their own abilities practically.

#### Build an innovation platform

Outside the classroom, the most important thing is to build an innovative platform. The development of cultural and creative industries has a certain orientation for the teaching of innovation in art colleges and universities. Therefore, when colleges and universities match social resources, they build more cooperation with cultural and creative industries and provide a real practice platform through school-enterprise cooperation. In this platform, the cultural industry is more market-oriented, which puts forward specific requirements for students' abilities. In this practice, students can effectively grasp the development trend of social aesthetics and future art development, combine the integration and crossover of multiple disciplines, stimulate



innovative inspiration, and show the inspiration in a more diversified and modern form when creating, which to some extent, can complete a whole loop of innovative practice.

It is worth noting that in the process of building, attention shall be paid to breaking the barriers between disciplines, forming interdisciplinary integration, and strengthening the integration of art with information technology, economic management, journalism, communication media, marketing and other related majors, so as to stimulate certain creativity and form a diversified innovative and creative practice system. Whether in the professional settings within the classroom or in the construction of practice platforms outside the classroom, attention shall be paid to the integration of art and other disciplinary fields. Only if we can break the barriers between disciplines and let the source of creativity emerge, then the practice of lacquer painting will be more meaningful.

How to build such a high-quality platform is what art colleges are trying to do nowadays. Under such polishing and practice, students will have a relatively intuitive understanding and cognition of the market, enterprises and cultural industry, and they will also have a certain self-evaluation of their own strengths and weaknesses so that their career planning will be clearer than before and their goals will be constantly broken down and refined so that they can gradually make changes with an eye on the current situation.

The talent cultivation of innovation in art colleges and universities is the result of the continuous development of modern society. Compared with the development of traditional art colleges and universities, modern innovation tends to be more result-oriented, with clearer goals, and actively seeks to integrate art majors with multiple disciplines so as to consciously cultivate students' innovation consciousness under the inspiration of mutual discipline majors, a common mode of innovation teaching in colleges and universities at present, in addition to the in-depth exploration on teaching. In practice research, it is still actively seeking cooperation with enterprises and striving to build a diversified innovative and creative industrial platform, in which students will gain more social resources and valuable practical experience, have a certain grasp of the market commercial art trends, and the innovative expressions will be more inclined to be expressed by using more modern techniques. It is believed that in the future, with the collaborative efforts of society and colleges and universities, such an innovative platform will be profoundly transformed with the goal of high quality and multiple channels, which will be more of a development of innovative teaching in art colleges and universities.



## Reference

- Qiao Shiguang. **The Complete Works of Modern Chinese Art - Lacquer Painting [M]**. Beijing: People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 1998: 15.
- Chen Jinhua. **Lacquer painting cannot have "lacquer" without "painting" or "painting" without "lacquer"[J]**. Chinese lacquer painting, 2017(1):63.
- Chen Enshen. **Postgraduate Teaching of Modern Lacquer Painting [M]**. Chongqing: Chongqing University Press, 2014: 300.
- Wu Jiahui. **On the Talent Cultivation of Lacquer Painting Creative Team [J]**. Art-Life, 2008(1):82.
- Zhang Zeguo. **Reflections on the Creation of Lacquer Painting in Higher Art Teaching [J]**. Art-Life, 2008(1):25.